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Film of Praise Builds Legend On Andropov

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MOSCOW, June 22 — The legend of Yuri V. Andropov has gained in depth with a new documentary film that portrays him as, among other things, a man who had a fine singing voice and wrote love poems to his wife.

Titled "Y. V. Andropov: Pages From a Life," the film makes Mr. Andropov the first Soviet leader since Lenin to have a posthumous film made about his life. Admiring movies were made about Stalin, Nikita S. Khrushchev and Leonid I. Brezhnev while they lived, and during Konstantin U. Chernenko's brief tenure a short movie was made about the border-guard unit he served in as a young draftee. Not one of these has been seen since its subject died.

Mr. Andropov, by contrast, has become something of a figure of popular legend since his death in February 1984, despite the fact that he served as Soviet leader for only 15 months, most of them in deteriorating health.

Work on the film began a year ago, on the 70th anniversary of Mr. Andropov's birth, and it recently had its premiere. Mr. Andropov would have been 71 on June 15.

The hourlong documentary contains only a few live shots of Mr. Andropov. Oleg Uralov, the director, said Mr. Andropov felt "embarrassed, even angry" when being filmed. But using photographs, interviews and film shot in Mr. Andropov's limousine, offices and residences, the work traces his life from his birth in a remote south Russian railroad depot, though his service in Karelia, Hungary, the K.G.B. and finally the Kremlin, with praiseful detail.

There are photographs of Mr. Andropov as a young Communist Youth organizer on the Volga River. His service in the Karelian partisan movement during the war is recalled by surviving comrades, including a woman who recalled his fine voice when he led his commandos in song.

Mr. Andropov's service in Hungary as Ambassador during the uprising and Soviet invasion of 1956 is presented with striking film clips of rebelling Hungarians, including the celebrated shots of secret policemen being executed. The film speaks of Mr. Andropov's courage and help, but makes no mention of the Soviet tanks that rolled into Hungary.

Mr. Andropov's 15 years of service as head of the K.G.B. is recorded in some remarkable footage, including his address to a graduating class of K.G.B. officers and his farewell speech to senior colleagues when he left. At the latter event, the camera repeatedly scans the faces of the senior officers.

The documentary also shows the book-lined apartment where Mr. Andropov lived in Moscow, and his wooden dacha on the high bank of the Moskva River outside the capital. One intriguing shot shows a handwritten manuscript identified as Mr. Andropov's memoirs, which otherwise have not been mentioned or published.

Mr. Andropov's son, Igor, now Ambassador to Greece, and his widow, Tatiana, are interviewed. His daughter, Irina, is briefly shown at home.

Mrs. Andropov, who is apparently physically disabled, tells how she met her husband at a Communist Youth gathering where he sang, then led her away to read his poems to her.

The narration fades into a later poem Mr. Andropov wrote to his wife as photographs of the couple through the years rotate on the screen:

*I wrote and thought, my dear,
That now at 50, as at 25,
Even when my head is almost gray,
I once again write verses to you.
O, let them laugh at the poet,
And let them be doubly jealous at
this,
That I write sonnets for my own and
not another's wife.
My dear one, my close one,
With you we walked through life for
years;
And the lots cast out by fate were
'yes' and 'no' for both of us.
Happiness shone down on both of us,
Grief shook us both.
We were, in weather good or bad,
True friends always.*

The poems, to be sure, were amateurish. But the power of poetry here is such that Mr. Andropov's legend was sure to get a major boost from the disclosure that he put his hand to verse.